

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4403

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 0621

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS
AND AMBASSADOR MAILLARD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OAS, PFOR, PA

SUBJECT: SAPENA PASTOR'S CANDIDACY FOR OAS SECRETARY
GENERAL

REF: (A) ASUNCION 573 (B) STATE 35133

1. YOUR PROMPT AND EXCELLENT GUIDANCE CONTAINED IN
REFTEL (B) MUCH APPRECIATED. I CALLED ON SAPENA
PASTOR ON FEBRUARY 17 AND TALKED TO HIM ALONG THE
LINES SUGGESTED IN REFTEL. HE WAS MOST GRATEFUL
FOR OUR RAPID RESPONSE AND SAID THAT HE SHARED THE
DEPARTMENT VIEWS FULLY.

2. IN REPLY TO MY SUGGESTION THAT HE CONSULT WITH
ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL BEFORE MAKING ANY FINAL DE-
CISIONS, HE SAID HE WOULD DO SO BUT THAT ARGENTINA
HAD PLAYED A DIRTY GAME. ARGENTINA HAS MADE IT
UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR TO ALL CONCERNED THAT ITS SUPPORT
FOR SAPENA WAS ONLY A TOKEN GESTURE GOOD FOR
THE FIRST ROUND AND THAT AFTERWARDS IT WOULD
SUPPORT A CANDIDATE OF ITS OWN, THUS WEAKENING
RATHER THAN STRENGTHENING HIS CANDIDACY.

3. IN SAPENA'S VIEWS GOMEZ BERGES IS LACKING
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IN EXPERIENCE AND WOULD NOT BE A SUITABLE

SECRETARY GENERAL. SAPENA BELIEVES THAT THE WORST DANGER TO THE OAS WOULD BE THE ELECTION OF A MEXICAN. HE SAID THAT ANY MEXICAN CANDIDATE WOULD AT BEST BE ERRATIC AND AT WORST TOTALLY CRAZY AND IT WOULD RUIN THE OAS. THE ELECTION OF EITHER AN ARGENTINE OR VENEZUELAN WOULD, ACCORDING TO SAPENA, SERVE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM. HE WAS, HOWEVER, BEARISH ON ORFILA'S CHANCES BECAUSE HE SAID TOO MANY LATIN AMERICANS CONSIDER ORFILA TOO CLOSELY CONNECTED AND ALLIED WITH US INDUSTRY AND TRADE WHO DON'T WISH THE US WELL WILL OPPOSE HIS CANDIDACY STRENUOUSLY. HE SAID WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM THAT PROBABLY THE BEST BET FOR STRENGTHENING THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM WOULD BE THE ELECTION OF A VENEZUELAN.

5. COMMENT: IT IS EVIDENT THAT SAPENA PASTOR AT THIS MOMENT IS SEARCHING DESPERATELY FOR A FACE-SAVING DEVICE. HIS WIFE HAD A VERY BAD WEEKEND (WHICH WAS CONFIRMED TO ME EARLIER BY THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN) AND SAPENA OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY STATING THAT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE POSITION EVEN IF HE HAD A CLEAR MAJORITY ON THEIR FIRST BALLOT. HE UNDERSTANDS WELL THAT IT IS DISADVANTAGEOUS TO MAKE ANY DECISION TOO QUICKLY BECAUSE THIS MAY THROW SOME OF HIS VOTES TO GOMEZ BERGES. BUT THERE IS A TIME ELEMENT IN HIS DECISION MAKING PROCESS BECAUSE SAPENA PASTOR SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING PRESIDENT OF THE OAS ASSEMBLY IN MARCH. THIS WOULD SUIT HIM BECAUSE IT IS AN HONOR, EVEN IF TEMPORARY AND IT WOULD NOT INVOLVE ANY TRAVEL FOR HIS WIFE. HE SAID HE COULD NOT BE PRESIDENT AND CANDIDATE AT THE SAME TIME, AND WOULD HAVE TO WITHDRAW BEFORE ACCEPTING THE PRESIDENCY. HE ALSO SAID THAT A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THAT OPPOSE HIS CANDIDACY TO BE SECRETARY GENERAL WOULD SUPPORT HIM FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENCY JUST TO GET RID OF HIM AS AN ASPIRANT FOR THE OTHER JOB. MY GUESS IS THAT HE SEES THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE MARCH

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OAS ASSEMBLY AS THE MOST ELEGANT WAY OUT OF HIS DILEMA AND WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS END. END COMMENT.

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